

VZCZCXYZ0000  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLP #2964/01 3112227  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 072227Z NOV 07  
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5574  
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 7241  
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 4616  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 8518  
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 5742  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2968  
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN 0430  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 3165  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 3651  
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4964  
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO 0128  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 5603  
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 0207  
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 0651  
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL  
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 002964

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/06/2017  
TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BL](#)  
SUBJECT: CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY: TENSIONS BOILING OVER

REF: A. LA PAZ 2949  
[1](#)B. LA PAZ 2827

Classified By: EcoPol chief Mike Hammer for reasons 1.4b,d

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The afternoon of November 6, Vice President Garcia Linera publicly eliminated the possibility of compromise with the opposition and declared that the Constituent Assembly is now in the hands of the people, who "will find a mechanism to liberate the Assembly from this ultraconservative blackmail, from this reactionary, racist and fascist kidnapping by certain business and political groups who want to harm the country." Upon hearing this broadcast, the Chuquisaca Inter-institutional Committee rejected the most recent compromise offer and Sucre residents took to the streets in protest. Garcia Linera later added that the constitutional process would now be controlled by the majority, which "will be more radical in themes of property and the distribution of wealth." In response, opposition mayors, prefects, and civic groups threatened to "rule by ordinances" if the MAS rules by decree and warned that autonomy is non-negotiable. Reportedly roughly 140 MAS-aligned members of the Constituent Assembly are considering meeting in Oruro, while the remaining opposition members plan to remain in Sucre, setting up a possibility that the MAS will claim a two-thirds majority (of those present in Oruro) and push through their draft of the constitution. Meanwhile, opposition assembly members may remain in Sucre and pass their own constitution. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Garcia Linera's comments marked a decisive end to his previously-conciliatory role as he tried to negotiate a deal with the opposition. Even in a country where political rhetoric is often heated, Garcia Linera's comments were strikingly aggressive, and some observers are suggesting that the usually more-moderately-behaved vice president is intentionally provoking conflict. As he often does, Garcia Linera called upon "the people" to mobilize to defend the Constituent Assembly. His words also brought opposition protesters into the streets of Sucre.

[1](#)3. (C) The ruling Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party and its allies have in recent weeks discussed the possibility of

moving the Constituent Assembly to another location, thus weakening Sucre's power over the constitution-writing body. In response to the failure of the final proposed compromise of November 6, the MAS and MAS-aligned assembly-members are now reportedly considering moving to Oruro. Meanwhile, opposition assembly-members have declared their intention to remain in Sucre, presenting the possibility of two parallel Constituent Assemblies, both claiming legitimacy on different grounds (a MAS-aligned assembly with the majority of representatives and an opposition-assembly in the legally-designated location.)

14. (C) The potential split into two Constituent Assemblies could allow the MAS to claim a two-thirds majority victory in Oruro, quasi-legitimizing their actions should they chose to push through a MAS draft constitution. (Note: It would not be the first time the MAS used a "divide and conquer" voting strategy. On August 22, after fist-fights broke out in Congress, MAS and opposition delegates retreated to separate buildings. Vice President Garcia Linera then reconvened only the MAS delegates and voted by majority of those present to impeach four of Bolivia's five Constitutional Tribunal judges. End note.)

15. (C) In a November 6 meeting, Santa Cruz Civic Committee President Branko Marinkovic told the Ambassador that if the MAS "illegally moves the Constituent Assembly", the opposition has lined up roughly 90 constituent assembly members (including some 20 MAS members) who would remain in Sucre and swiftly approve an opposition constitution. Marinkovic stated that since approval of a constitution only requires two-thirds of "those present", this opposition constitution would be legal. (Comment: There is some question as to whether this opposition Assembly would have a quorum and whether it would therefore be valid. End comment.) Presumably, however, in a situation with two Constituent Assemblies, the MAS would also pass their draft constitution with two-thirds of their representatives, leaving Bolivia with two Assemblies and two draft constitutions. (Note: Marinkovic also said that the opposition is unwilling to give Evo the one thing he most wants in a new constitution: reelection of the president. As a party whose primary--some might say only--asset is Evo, the MAS is dependent on the ability to reelect the man who represents their 'party of one'. End note.)

16. (C) Comment: Politics and rhetoric surrounding the Constituent Assembly are heating up, possibly to the point of boiling over--resulting in violence in the streets as both sides call on their supporters to protest. In a recent interview with an Italian newspaper, President Morales laid the blame for the failure of the Constituent Assembly on "rightists", clarifying that there are "internal rightists and external rightists" and defining the latter as "the Embassy of the United States." Evo warned of a possible military coup and repeated his claim that the U.S. Embassy is plotting against him (ref A). The timing of the absurd allegations against the United States is suggestive: in the past, Evo and his advisors have used the United States as a convenient distraction when the MAS took controversial actions. The sudden increase in rhetoric about the Constituent Assembly, in conjunction with the attempt to distract attention by scapegoating the United States, may signal that the MAS plans to take another step along the road to complete power. Vice President Garcia Linera's strident tone seems to signal that the MAS is prepared to move now to "Plan B" (ref B)--using conflict to force through its own constitution.

GOLDBERG